

## Home Reading.

## A Seasonable Wall.

(From the Newark Advertiser.)  
The melancholy days are gone,  
The saddest of the year,  
For when we seek my home,  
To all forlorn and drear,  
No savory odors to suggest  
Potage, roti, entree,  
But spicy lambroos broods-in fact,  
Intensified wash-day.  
The house-cleaner and white-wash man  
By force of arms ruin here.  
Yes, these are the melancholy days,  
The saddest of the year.

BLOOMFIELD.

-V. R. H.

## Married on Her Tenth Birthday.

Wherever a few men are thrown together in very close and constant association—as, for example, in the management of different departments of the same business, they fall, as if by gravitation, into certain fixed and fixed relationships towards each other, which soon become so well recognized and admitted, that any inversion of them would seem unnatural.

And in all such small societies, whatever types of character are missing, may count with certainty on finding the will and the butt.

Indeed, I undertake to say with confidence that the reader never knew any half-score of men, exclusively associated, one of whom was not recognized as the sayer of smart things, and another as the good-natured, stupid fellow on whom it was always safe to crack your joke.

At the establishment of Tovey and Brother, in the Borough, these two characters were as well known as Tovey and Brother themselves, and I propose now to make them known to the reader.

I take it for granted, that the reader already knows Tovey and Brother, and is not one of those who make the gross mistake of calling that eminent firm Tovey Brothers.

To speak of "Tovey Brothers," in fact, to be guilty of a very unjustifiable misrepresentation—as if the brothers were on an equal footing. Whereas the title "Tovey and Brother" explains itself, and enables any reflecting person to understand at once that "Tovey" is Tovey pure and simple—the head of the firm; while "Brother," though Tovey too, is only Tovey with a limitation.

In the house itself the one is always known as Mr. Tovey, and the other as Mr. Charles; and if the reader has any thought of opening an account with the firm, it may be useful to him to bear that in mind.

Unless, however, he is himself in a considerable way of business, Tovey and Brother will not thank him for his account, they being only wholesale, and wholesale on the very largest scale.

When you enter their place of business, you might wonder (if every one did not know already) what it is they deal in. A few scores of little bottles ranged on shelves, and filled with various colored liquids and powders; a few scores of little polished mahogany cases, each with its printed Latin label; this is all in the way of stock that meets the eye.

But when you see the long array of well-bound ledgers, journals, cash books, you need no further assurance that they do deal in something more than little bottles.

When you see Mr. Tovey and Mr. Charles, you need not be told that they are prosperous men, and that their rosy faces and portly shapes are those of men who have long known something about bigger bottles than any you see upon their shelves.

Ordinarily, however, you might go in without much chance of seeing either of them. To get to their private offices you have to go through the clerks' office first, and then through Mr. Splutter's. And unless your business is of very unusual importance, you will find it quite within the capacity of one of the clerks, or, if failing, then certainly within Mr. Splutter's, without interruption to the newspaper of either of the principals.

I myself confess that I never in point of fact got behind the clerks' office, and have always had a very considerable awe of Mr. Splutter, the great men's great man, and manager.

Not that he was ever anything but very civil to me when he saw me, but he has a singular inability sometimes to see me even when brushing close past me, and this used to so fill me with perplexity as to whether I should say "Good morning" or not, that before I could quite make up my mind he had usually gone.

As for Mr. Tovey and Mr. Charles, I don't think they ever did see me.

It was to my father that my visits were paid. I used to call on my way from school, and generally had to wait a few minutes before he was ready to walk home with me. He was one of their young men in the clerks' office. There were, if I remember rightly, about ten of them, all of whom had been young men a very considerable time, and many of whom had younger men and women at home, their children.

In the eyes of the house, however, any one was a young man until he had been married. I remember that office as a model of staid decorum and gravity. Everything went on as if by machinery. There was a time for everything, and everything done in its time. A place for everything, and everything in its place. I could have found it easy to believe that the very height of each clerk's collar was regulated by office by-law, and the style of each chain and seal by fixed specification.

No starch has ever yet been made, however, so stiff that a man cannot laugh in it; and a good deal of quiet fun went on amidst the monotony of business. Many a joke was passed round from stool to stool, and I think I never called there once without hearing some new witicism or some latest joke of Mr. Rasper's.

Boy as I was, I dare say most of these had been diluted to suit my comprehension before they were told to me, and suffered in the dilution; but even yet, as then, I think of Mr. Rasper as a fellow of infinite humor.

I suppose his humor must have depended much on manner, tone, and little accidents of place which could not be rendered on paper, for it was generally understood that Mr. Rasper was an ill-used man, in that he could never get any of his good things into print.

But not the less, whether his wit were up to or below the standard of the comic papers, he served that office with fun, enough, and poor Mr. Bog with more than enough.

He did not often say ill-natured things, but very wit must have his butt, his anvil—on which to hammer and sharpen his darts, and Mr. Bog did duty in that capacity.

Jester and jestee were as unlike in all respects as well as any two men well could be.

Mr. Rasper's work, and his way of doing it, were, like his conversation, light and sprightly. He moved about with an elastic, quick step, as if he had a difficulty in restraining from dancing. He adorned his writing with flourishes until it was hardly legible. And when Mr. Splutter tried to make him discontinue those embellishments, he gave such whimsical reasons for their continuance that he always laughed the manager out of his attempt to find fault.

Mr. Bog was heavy and solid. His handwriting was as regular as engraving. His ledger had not a blot in it from beginning to end. And when any figure in it had to be altered, it was done so neatly as to be almost an improvement. He was a plodding, thoroughly reliable man; as punctual as the clock, and as grave in all ways—slow in all things, but happily, above all things, "slow to anger."

Mr. Bog had never been known by any one in the office to make a joke; and had not often, they said, been made to comprehend one. Mr. Rasper never made anything else, and saw them where others intended no such thing. Mr. Bog made up, however, for his dullness by the frankness with which he admitted it, and by his invariable good temper.

It was quite impossible to put him out, and when the suspicion came across him as it did now and then, that Rasper had been hammering at him for an hour or more, he bore no malice, which was, indeed, a feeling into which he could not enter.

There was, however, one matter in which all in the office concurred that they had a right to find fault with Bog. He was unmarried, and all the rest were married men.

And on this shortcoming of his one and all were determined that he should have no peace. Not a day passed but some new hypothesis was started as to the reason of his continuing a bachelor; not a day without some new name being suggested to him as that of a lady with whom he might yet have a chance. To all of which suggestions Mr. Bog persistently and good-naturedly turned his deaf ear.

A respite came to him twice a year (which must have been very welcome) in all this worrying.

Twice a year Mr. Bog went on his travels, for about a month at a time. For it was the custom of the house to let their traveling be done by the clerks, instead of keeping travelers to do nothing else. In this way one or two of them were always out, and all of them in turn had a pleasant relief from the monotony of office life.

Now, Bog," Mr. Rasper would say, "you must really try and manage it this journey. Represent your case once more to that Leicester girl, and perhaps she'll change her mind."

It was one of Mr. Rasper's friendly assumptions that Mr. Bog had been rejected in every town he went to, and Leicester being in his round, it was usually the Leicester girl who was recommended for a second trial.

Mr. Bog would answer in his stolid way that if she really did relent he would let Rasper know; and so they would part, and though they all missed Bog when he was on his travels, no one missed him more than Rasper, or was so glad as he to see him back again.

And thus the joke was repeated year after year, until last Bog's case came to be considered by all of them so thoroughly hopeless that if he had come down some morning in a pink vest and lemon-colored tights, no one would have thought it half so surprising as that he should really take Mr. Rasper's advice. Mr. Bog, indeed, at forty-five, was held by one and all to be utterly impervious to female blandishments.

Let the reader judge, therefore, for himself, with what effect this bomb-shell fell in the office four days after Mr. Bog was supposed to have started on one of his journeys.

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But at that moment Mr. Splutter came in, and on being tendered the newspaper, waived the offer, and said, "Ah, ah, I know all about it. Bog's wedding—that's what you want me to look at, isn't it? Bless you, I have known of it for more than a week. Bog told me and Mr. Charles, but made us promise to keep the secret till his very morning after he left here. He asked me to be present, but I could not go. Now, Mr. Rasper, how do you feel now? Your occupation's gone. You will have nothing to say about it." And Mr. Splutter, chuckling very loudly, and rubbing his hands with glee, was retreating to his own apartment.

"O, but stop a minute," cried Rasper. "Do you know all about this, too?" And he read the editorial note about the tenth birthday.

It was Mr. Splutter's turn now to be surprised.

"No sense," he said, "let me see." And, taking the paper, he read it for himself. "It must be a mistake. It can't be true."

"Late of Kingston, Jamaica. Who is she?" asked Rasper.

"Some family connection, I understood him," said Mr. Splutter. "They do marry very young, I have been told, in these hot climates. But in England it is impossible; it would not have been allowed. And Bog would not have done such a thing. It is all nonsense—nonsense." And he shut himself into his own room.

And, in short, that was the conclusion to which all in the office came, namely, that this editorial note was a piece of very ridiculous fooling which Bog had purposely had inserted for their mystification. Considering which, Mr. Rasper, so long as he had disbelieved the marriage itself, had denounced the whole to be "pretty fair for Bog," said—now that the marriage was an established fact—that the joke about the bride's age was not only in bad taste, but as a joke was also quite inexcusable, though Bog's first.

During the following weeks of Mr. Bog's absence he furnished more conversation to the office, and was the subject of more jokes on the part of Mr. Rasper, even than if he had been present.

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## An Extraordinary Offer.

H. B. Thistle, successor to Ingalls & Co., 761 Broad Street, Newark, N. J., offers while the goods last (there being but few of them) the following bargains, and everything else in stock at correspondingly low prices.

Julius Verne's Works, at 50 cts. per vol.; regular price \$1.25.  
Hall Hours with the Poets, \$1.50 each; regular price \$5.  
Centennial History of the U. S., 55 cts.; regular price \$2.  
Poets and Poetry of England, \$1.50;